

Round Table & Closing of 2nd Istanbul Hub Seminar Airline strategies for the opening of the new airport in Istanbul

The round table included most of the speakers of the seminar and covered the following topics: Extra capacity for the Istanbul Sabiha Gokcen International airport, implication of bilateral agreements multilateral agreements between Turkey and the EU members, airlines merger and acquisitions of airlines in Turkey and was completed with suggestions to students about the aviation sector.

Although the main focus during the seminar was on future Istanbul new airport, one alternative way to increase capacity is by expanding capacity at the second airport Sabiha Gokcen international airport, which is the main base of Pegasus airlines. Mrs. Güliz mention that Pegasus is working closely with the Turkish authorities and airport operator to increase the capacity. There is a project to build a second runway that could be operational in 2018, however there are also plans to close the actual runway for upgrading the surface. Therefore, extra capacity due to the new runway would only be available as from 2020. A quicker way pointed out by Ms. Güliz was to upgrade the taxiways that could mean up to 40% of increase in capacity and a much shorter timeframe.

The actual bilateral agreement between Turkey and EU countries states are under discussion. EU seems to be in favor to implement what is called horizontal agreement, but Pegasus airlines, although is in favor to increase the degree of liberalization in the bilateral relation, is not in favor of the full horizontal agreement been discussed. Such agreement would allow any european airline flying from any point in Europe to Turkey and vice versa. Mrs. Güliz highlighted that Istanbul location has the geographical advantage of connecting east and west, as well as the lack of night curfews on its airports.

Taking into account the actual level of air traffic congestion and lack of capacity, the possibility of merger and acquisitions among airlines in Turkey was discussed. Although not major legal challenges are perceived Ms. Güliz from Pegasus did not see very likely that to happen. From the international perspective Dr. Mayer mentioned examples of the US with the merger Southwest airlines and Airtran and in Europe the acquisition of BMI by British Airways (BA). The case of BA was a clear case to gain slots at congested London Heathrow airport.

The experts took the opportunity to give few suggestions to students. Mrs. Güliz mentioned that Airlines can be a very attractive company to work on, but students should not discard to work for the aviation authorities in areas related to regulation. Dr. Mendes de Leon highlighted the attractiveness of the aviation sector from the legal points of view as it included different dimensions as for instance competition law. Dr. Gunel recommend students to gain international experience and to Turkish aviation sector to increase the staff from abroad. Dr. Mayer completed recommending students to get any opportunity as for instance an internship in order to gain experience and develop the network the industry.